

SPRING 2020



MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

# Spokesman

WE CARE FOR THE COUNTRY

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A publication for the more than 21,000 member families of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation



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# Spokesman

MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

WE CARE FOR THE COUNTRY

SPRING 2020



## ON THE COVER:

During the American Farm Bureau Issues Advisory Committee Meeting, Montana Farm Bureau members visited the Department of Agriculture. Pictured are: Tom DePuydt, Tonya Liles, Nicole Rolf, Megan Hedges, Don Steinbeisser, Jr. and Mike Murphy.

*Photo Courtesy of Rebecca Colnar*

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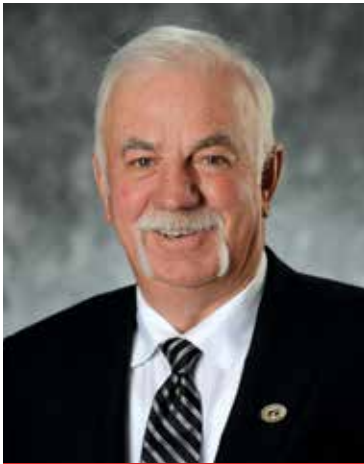


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**Hans McPherson**  
President, Montana Farm  
Bureau Federation

“ Now more  
than ever we need  
to band together  
with our friends and  
neighbors in  
Montana Farm  
Bureau to ensure  
our voices  
are heard. ”

# The Times **They Are A Changing**

**T**his editorial has been a very difficult one for me to get my head around. I had originally planned to write about how Farm Bureau got through successfully celebrating its past 100 years and how we look forward to next 100 years with great trade deals, common sense regulations, impressive technology and the indomitable Farm Bureau spirit.

But as I put pen to paper, things started to become strange. I don't mind saying I was stopped in my tracks by the news that the U.S. will be importing beef from Brazil at a time when American ranchers aren't even covering the cost of production raising calves. What's that all about? Next was the astonishing worldwide pandemic called the coronavirus turning the whole world upside down and roundabout. At first everyone was a bit skeptical about it, but as I write this close to press time, we are all realizing that it's real, it's scary and it has a very strong potential to be in our communities. The best we can do is follow the advice of the medical professionals and stay home; if you have to head out to the grocery store or other venue—if it's open—practice that “social distancing.”

As with any hard times in the past, good can come from bad. One bright spot is that farmers, ranchers and the entire food production chain have stepped up to ensure people continue to have plentiful, nutritious food. I find it interesting that grocery store shortages are paper and cleaning products and food like Ramen noodles (are those even food?). Yet, there is still good produce, meat and milk.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue recently sent a message to everyone involved in agriculture, saying, “You've provided such abundant, healthy, wholesome, affordable, available food that we take you for granted. For all you, from the people who are stocking those shelves, from the people who are driving the trucks to get this food to us, the people who are processing the food and the people who grow the food and all the vendors who supplied our farmers to help them grow this food, whether it's fertilizer or feed or seed or any other input, I say thank you so much for what you're doing.”

Even in these challenging, uncertain times, it's encouraging to learn Secretary Perdue appreciates and understands agriculture is such an essential part of this country's infrastructure.

Speaking of even more insanity and uncertainty, it's an election year and as rural Americans, we need to be especially vigilant in voting as we are such a minority. Now more than ever we need to band together with our friends and neighbors in Montana Farm Bureau to ensure our voices are heard. There is no better time to renew your membership and sign up your friends and neighbors for Century Club dues that help with our legislative efforts. It is a great bargain to join your county Farm Bureau because your dues cover three great organizations; your county Farm Bureau, the Montana Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau. I just returned from the American Farm Bureau Board meeting in Washington, D.C., and I can assure you that all of the board have their members' concerns in mind. It's more important than ever to keep informed on what is happening and become involved in Farm Bureau. In fact, this issue of the Spokesman covers our members who have attended the MFBF Fly-In as well as the American Farm Bureau Issues Advisory Committee meetings. During that time not only did our members have the opportunity to visit with staff and other Farm Bureau members at the AFBF office, but they were able to meet with our Congressional delegation and government agencies. I can't say enough about how being active in Montana Farm Bureau can get you to places you never thought you could go!

It's critical to pay close attention to what is happening in your community, in your country and in the world. Don't be complacent and think they won't. “Well those folks who want to make detrimental changes to my way of life can't do that.” When people want to eliminate the electoral college, don't ever think they can't do it. They will try and try—and they might succeed. Just sayin'!

Stay healthy!



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# The End of Animal Agriculture; **Not**

I recently read a report suggested to me by a friend in the natural resource industry: "Rethinking Agriculture 2020-2030; The Second Domestication of Plants and Animals, the Disruption of the Cow, and the Collapse of Industrial Livestock Farming." This so-called study was put out by a think tank called RethinkX. Their claim to fame seems to be that they conduct studies on disruptions in markets caused by technology. The top line of this report indicates that in the next ten years, the demand for cow products will have fallen by 70 percent and the cattle industry will be bankrupt. The current industrialized, animal agriculture system will be replaced with a "Food-as-Software model," where foods are engineered by scientists at a molecular level and uploaded to databases that can be accessed by food designers anywhere in the world.

By 2035, about 60 percent of the land currently being used for livestock and feed productions will be freed for other uses. That is about 1/3 of the U.S. or about the size of the Louisiana Purchase. Modern foods will be cheaper and superior to animal-derived foods, more nutritious, tastier, and more convenient. Environmental benefits will be profound with net greenhouse gas emissions from the sector falling by 45 percent by 2030. Deforestation, species extinction, water scarcity and aquatic pollution from animal waste will be lessened.

These types of reports don't resonate with me because as the old saying goes "follow the money and see who profits" from this kind of propaganda. This seems to be the case with this report as research was funded by the Jeremy Collier Foundation whose website indicates they are for ending animal agriculture. Other financial contributors include The Good Food Institute that promotes plant and cellular-based foods, Wild Earth who makes Vegan Dog Food and Geltor who makes designer proteins and foods.

There are concepts the authors of the report have overlooked. They indicate the public who flock to engineered foods are the same folks who currently want natural

beef without additives or chemicals. Are we to believe that in 10 years the consuming public will have a change of heart? Will they suddenly want bio-engineered foods that are manufactured in a bath of chemicals and additives? I don't think so. Secondly, the authors indicate that manufacturing meat is much more efficient than growing it. I have yet to find another way to turn photosynthesis into delicious, edible protein, especially by utilizing grasses that are unpalatable to humans on land that is not suitable for cropping.

My experience with the current line of plant and cellular-based meats shows they are much more expensive and in the case of cellular meats, require a significant amount of energy to produce. That certainly doesn't make them an environmental asset. Remember, the most important point agriculture must be aware of is there are people pushing their anti-meat agenda. As farmers, ranchers and agricultural organizations, part of our time and budget should be toward educating consumers that the claims that livestock and agriculture are harming the environment are unfounded. We need to lead the charge in marketing our products as sustainable, healthy and affordable. Now is the time for us to ensure we are marketing our product from the beginning of the production chain through the sale of the end product. One great way of doing that is through our Beef Checkoff. These dollars go directly to research and development, as well as marketing. If you haven't signed the checkoff form yet, please do before you market this year's calf crop.

I have tried a couple of the plant-based meat products just to see what all stir is about, and unless they get better, they will need more than a national advertising campaign to make me change. Show me the beef.

After reading the 72-page report, it seems that the authors must be old hippies who listened to the classic Zager and Evans rock ballad, "In the Year 2525" wherein everything we think, do and say is in the pill we took today. Personally, I just don't see it.



**John Youngberg**  
Executive Vice President, MFBF

“As farmers, ranchers and agricultural organizations, part of our time and budget should be toward educating consumers that the claims that livestock and agriculture are harming the environment are unfounded.”





**Zippy Duvall**  
President, American Farm  
Bureau Federation

“Agriculture education and STEM are a natural fit because farming is science in action and each STEM field is critical to the sustainability of our industry.”

# Sharing Ag's Story with Consumers of All Ages

Consumers of all ages have a real hunger for more information about where their food comes from, and that gives farmers a great opportunity to share about the work we love. Who better to answer questions about how animals are cared for, why certain seeds are used, what role technology plays on a farm, and how our water and soil are being protected than the folks who are out in the field every day?

Studies show that consumers trust farmers and ranchers and want to hear our stories. But we also know that with social media and the constant news and entertainment cycle, there's a lot of competition for "airtime." We can't be in all places at once. But we can work together to promote ag literacy.

That's why the mission of the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture is devoted to ag education. When it comes to ag education, you can never start too early either.

From lesson plans to classroom activities to accurate ag books, the Foundation continues to expand its offerings and resources every year. We want all children—and their parents—to understand what goes into growing a safe, sustainable food supply and how innovation is turning crops into clean energy and climate-friendly textiles.

I'm especially excited about the newest release coming from the Foundation's new book publishing venture, Feeding Minds Press. *"Tales of the Dairy Godmother: Chuck's Ice Cream Wish"* is now available for online purchase. This beautifully illustrated children's book follows a young boy who'd rather have some ice cream than do his chores, but then his Dairy Godmother appears to make his dreams come true in a way he doesn't expect. Both Chuck and young readers then go on a special adventure to learn all about the work that goes into making one of our favorite treats.

As a former dairyman, I can't wait for kids like Chuck to learn more about the care and hard work that goes into running a dairy farm. Feeding Minds Press is committed to producing kids' books like this one that tell the real story of modern agriculture.

Too many folks have a romanticized view of agriculture, rather than see it as the innovative industry it is. We need more kids to see this and pursue careers in agriculture if we're going to continue to be sustainable into the future. And who knows, maybe this dairy-tale will inspire the next farmer, veterinarian or ag researcher out there!

The Foundation is also looking to tend the soil of ag curiosity throughout a young person's education, into middle and high school by connecting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) lessons to agriculture.

Agriculture education and STEM are a natural fit because farming is science in action and each STEM field is critical to the sustainability of our industry. We'd love nothing more than to see an ag component in the STEM curriculum of all our nation's schools. To that end, the Foundation has partnered with the Beef Checkoff to bring teachers out to farms so they can apply what they learn about agriculture to their classroom lessons and activities. And soon, we will offer a new science curriculum based on beef production, also developed in partnership with the Beef Checkoff, to teach middle- and high-school students about sustainable agricultural production methods and how agriculture practices apply science to the care of animals and the environment.

Wouldn't it be amazing to see agriculture as a core component of every classroom? We believe it's possible and are continuing to work toward that goal.

These resources are just a sampling of the generous servings of ag education tools, books and activities available from the Foundation. You can keep up on the latest and connect your local schools and teachers in your communities with these resources by checking out our website [agfoundation.org](http://agfoundation.org). Be sure to see what Montana Farm Bureau offers through a compilation of agricultural lessons on their "MY AG" webpage: [mfbf.org/Programs/MY-AG](http://mfbf.org/Programs/MY-AG). If you haven't filed your taxes yet or have filed for an extension, don't forget to check the box on your tax form to donate to Montana Ag Literacy.







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# We've Got **This!**

BY MARIAH SHAMMEL

**W**ell, it's official. Thanks to the COVID-19 or Coronavirus, school is closed for at least two weeks and we've been told to self-isolate and maintain social distancing. At first it seemed a little alarming and it was hard not to panic; but then they started detailing how to go about doing this. With each bullet point they listed, I replied with an enthusiastic "check" and by the time they reached the end, I had checked every single one off the list. I wasn't sure if I should be relieved that, aside from not sending our kids to school, we didn't have to change our day-to-day routines at all to meet the recommendations or offended that I was technically considered "socially distant" and "self-isolated" even before this whole thing started. I decided to go with the former and started thinking of all the ways our less-than-normal lifestyle could really come in handy over these next several weeks.

First off, there's the whole thing where unless the UPS lady makes a rare appearance to deliver the latest book for book club (this month's book is *Devil in a White City* and next month's read is *Where the Crawdads Sing* if anyone has some extra time to read a book), the chances of seeing someone without our last name darken our front door is slim to none. Without the kids going to school, we have no reason to go to town except for the random parts run or grocery grab, which we'll get into later. Not to mention we're calving, so just in case we thought we were social butterflies during other times of the year, we can officially rule that idea out now. That "social distancing" thing? We live that. Every. Day.

Now let's get to the groceries. Every single time we go shopping, we fill our carts like it's the last time we'll ever see ketchup. When you open our cabinets, beware the massive bags of flour, sugar, coffee and bread that will simultaneously jump out at you. Beans? Check. Oatmeal? Check. Vats of vanilla? Check. Every type of any ingredient you may ever need... in bulk? Check. If we do run out of food, though I'm pretty sure I would die of old age before that happened, I feel fairly

confident we've got the whole (very fresh!) beef thing covered and as far as milk goes, I think I know where I could find a few hundred gallons of milk running around.

Word on the street (internet, actually, since you don't want to be on the streets right now) is that everyone is hoarding masks, latex gloves and toilet paper. The toilet paper thing boggles my mind because as far as I know, this is a respiratory virus? Either way, thanks to our afore-mentioned Costco runs, stocking up on paper products is just part of the undertaking we call grocery shopping. The further our houses get from town, the higher the toilet paper tower, which our kids inevitably build every time we unpack the Suburban. I don't usually stockpile

**“ It doesn't matter if you see skyscrapers or cows when you look out your kitchen window, we've all had to make sacrifices, some way worse than others, but everyone has been greatly affected. ”**

masks and gloves but we do have a few dust masks around and we even have some breathing apparatus do-hickey we use for cleaning especially dusty grain bins. They may not be the same exact type people are looking for but from everything I've seen, this doesn't seem like a very good time to get picky.

Similarly, did I mention it's calving season? If wrist-high latex gloves are where it's at, I have to think that armpit-long OB gloves are even better and we're certainly stocked up on those. Plus, with our arm in the back end of a cow on a



regular basis, we're pretty good at not touching our faces. If we ever forget that, a quick whiff of whatever you left behind when your finger approached your nose is a good reminder to never do that again. All in all, I'm feeling really good about our chances in kicking this Coronavirus thing but if I do happen to get down about it, I have four life-loving kids in my midst who are so good at reminding me how fortunate we are and how great this country (and world) is.

By the time you read this it will be three weeks after Governor Bullock made his school-closure announcements and I really hope this is all a thing of the past. Whether it is or not, know this: we're all in it together. It doesn't matter if you see skyscrapers or cows when you look out your kitchen window, we've all had to make sacrifices, some way worse than others, but everyone has been greatly affected. There are a lot of moving parts to this situation, most of which are out of our control; but one thing we can control is how we treat ourselves and others. Be kind, be safe and don't forget to laugh. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to sit back and watch those strict "screen-time" rules fly right out the window as we enter day three of no school. Then I may write a thank you note to Disney Plus.





# 62nd Annual Agents' Meeting Held in Billings, Montana

**M**ountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company recently held its 62nd Annual Agents' Meeting in Billings, Montana. The annual conference includes recognition of those agents who achieved superior production and



**Will Johnson, Top Montana Agent**



**Julie Bramlet**



**Jake Konen**

## Mountain West's President's Club

overall service during 2019.

Will Johnson of Missoula, MT, was honored as Mountain West's "Top Montana Agent" for his outstanding sales production.

An elite group of agents qualified for

Mountain West's President's Club. This award is presented to those agents who were on goal in three lines of insurance: life, auto, and fire/liability. Those Montana agents who earned this prestigious award are Julie Bramlet of Dillon, MT, and Jake Konen of Kalispell, MT.

Mountain West Farm Bureau agents have been serving customers across Montana and Wyoming for over 70 years and specialize in building personal relationships within their communities. The local, face-to-face communication and dedication to quality service are what set Mountain West agents apart from the rest.



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# Mountain West Agent Will Johnson: Growing a business, serving a community

BY REBECCA COLNAR

**W**hen the Spokesman interviewed Will Johnson five years ago, he was operating out of a leased building on Reserve Street, primarily working with Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company as an insurance agent and had recently welcomed his first child. Five years later, Johnson and his business partner own a commercial building on Connery Way (near North Reserve) in Missoula, he has earned his designation as a financial and wealth services advisor, has two children, has satellite offices in Deer Lodge and Stevensville, and has been named Mountain West Farm Bureau Agent of the Year for 2019.

"It's wonderful to have a permanent location in Missoula, which serves as the base to service much of western Montana," noted Johnson on talking about the new building. "The 3600-square



foot permanent location has 5 Mountain West agents, shared service staff, claims adjusters and some of my sales team—altogether we have 12 people working in the building. We operate as a team, and each specializes in certain areas of the business."

When Johnson was looking to run the satellite office in Deer Lodge, agent Jim Decker stepped up and teamed with




**Mountain West Farm Bureau  
Mutual Insurance Company**

Johnson to take over the operation. He specializes in insurance so that Johnson can work in wealth management. The office in Stevensville is by appointment only, and the insurance sales manager, Tim Unger, and Johnson meet clients there. Johnson said there are plans to staff that office with sales and service in the future.

"Wealth management is one of the pieces of the financial planning process," noted Johnson. "Now, instead of just having a single arrow, there's a whole quiver of products we can offer in the planning process. Insurance is the asset protection piece, while wealth management can help our clients grow their assets. Our setup and approach ensure that our clients have the full suite of products and services with the ease of one familiar team, working together on their behalf."

The agent admits he especially enjoys the kitchen table conversations with farmers and ranchers and discovering what their concerns are and how he can help them. "Those really are my most treasured appointments, and farmers and

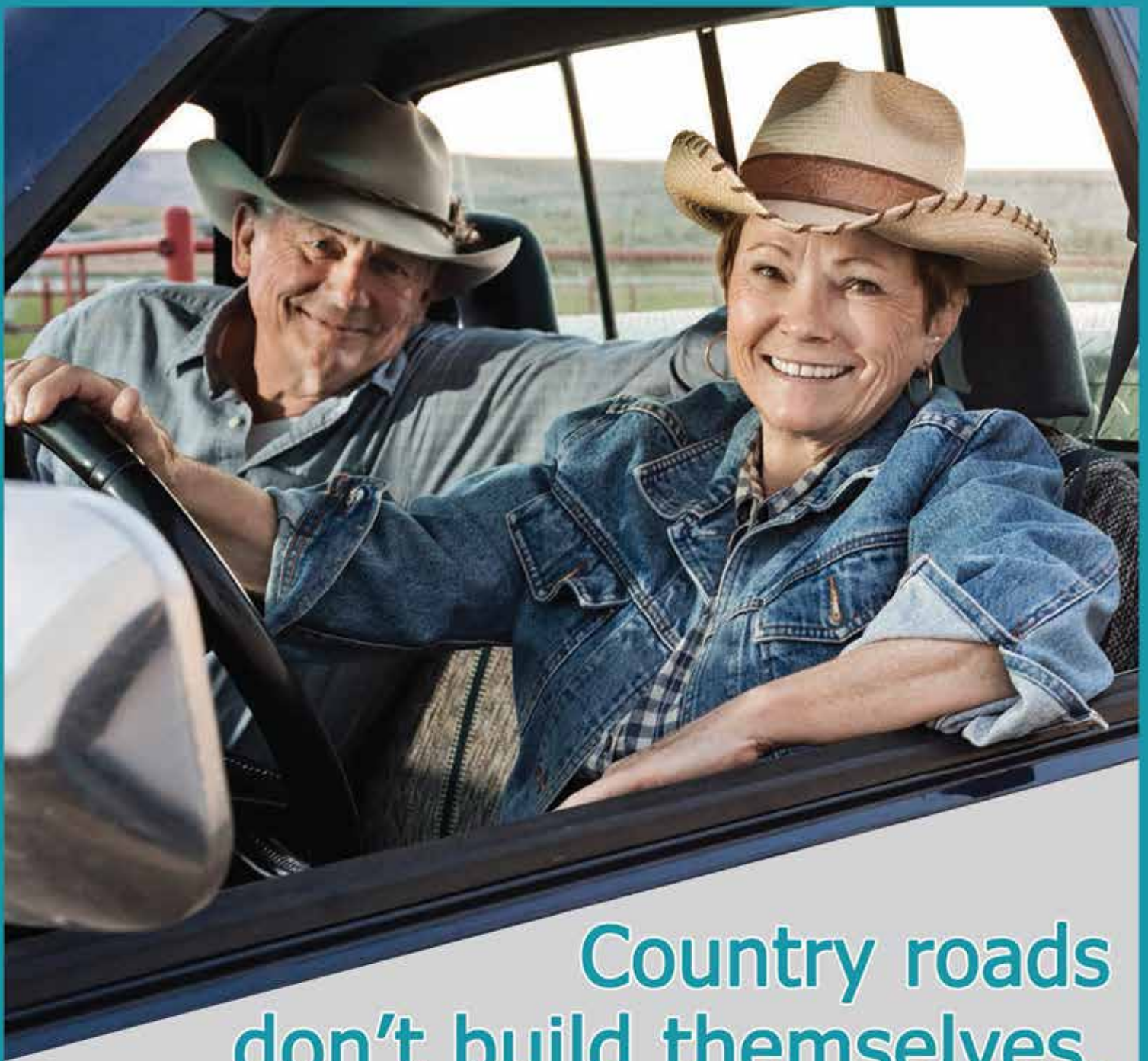
ranchers are tremendously rewarding to work for," he said.

He acknowledges that western Montana has treated him and his offices well. "They have been wonderful supporters of us which is why we try to give back to our communities," Johnson indicated, listing the deeper investments in the community which have included teaming up with Northwest County Farm Bureau to sponsor the Chamber of Commerce Ag Appreciation Banquet, the Angus Tour which was held in 2019 in western Montana, purchasing 4-H livestock each year at the fair, supporting the Montana Farm Bureau Centennial along with supporting numerous non-profit organizations. He is immediate past president of the Missoula Chamber of Commerce and has served on the Chamber's Ag Committee for several years.

Johnson's advice to people in these trying times is that there is uncertainty in the world, but "don't let the emotion or hysteria of the moment derail you from your essential long-term plans."







# Country roads don't build themselves.

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# Meet New MFBF District 3 Director **Kris Descheemaeker**

BY REBECCA COLNAR, SPOKESMAN EDITOR

**K**ris Descheemaeker grew up in the Farm Bureau tradition. Her father, Howard Kolstad, was an agent for Farm Bureau (he was listed as one of the 100 Influential Honorees during the MFBF Centennial) and although he owned a ranch, he leased it so he could work in town. His family still had a home on the place, so Kris grew up riding horses and enjoying country life.

"My siblings and I grew up showing horses and were active in youth and high school rodeo. I competed in goat tying and barrel racing. I tried to rope and my brothers tried really hard to help me learn, but it just didn't work out," Kris remembers with a chuckle. "In fact, they told me, 'You're done. If you enter another roping event, we are going to break your arm!'"

Kris married Dennis Descheemaeker in 1979 following high school. His family had moved from Sheridan, Montana

to Lewistown in 1975, where the family continues to ranch east of town.

"I was a full-time ranch employee. My first tractor driving experience was with a four-wheel drive tractor with 36-feet of tool bar," Kris said. "The rule was if you get the tool bar into the fence, you fixed the fence, so I was really careful. I knew a lot about horses but nothing about cows or farming, so I was actually the 'perfect employee' as Dennis could teach me his way."

In those years, as is done today, the Descheemaekers ran all the cows through the corral. "Back then, I was the night calver, although now, I call myself a widow to the cows since Dennis is the main night guy."

The Descheemaekers raised three children, now grown with grandkids, on the ranch. Their daughter Nicole runs a home daycare in Fort Benton while sons Kyle and Nolan ranch with the family.

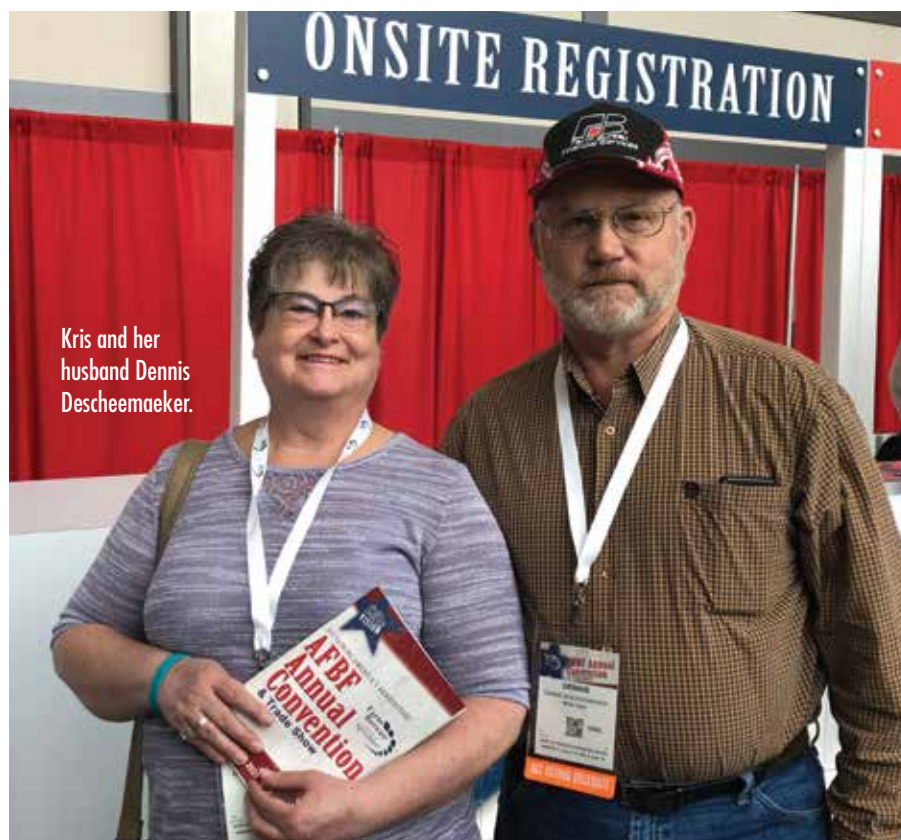
"We feel very fortunate our sons were able to come back," said Kris. "The Descheemaeker Ranch has always been a family business with Dennis' dad's dream being they could expand and bring their sons back. In 1990 the family bought another place and brother Paul came back to handle the farming operation while Kris and Dennis switched to handling cattle on the original ranch and brother Pat took over operation of the newly purchased property. Pat passed away in a fire on the ranch in 2011. Paul's son, Kahle, is now part of the ranch, as well. Dennis' dad, Larry, still has a hand in the management and sometimes helps out. It truly is a generational family run ranch."

Kris has always believed in taking the lead in organizations that make a difference and advocate for agriculture. In the 1980s, she was active in Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE) at the local chapter and at the state level, having served as Montana WIFE secretary.

"I backed off of WIFE when my kids became active in 4-H and sports. In 1998-99 our daughter served as a 4-H state officer, so there was an opportunity to become a state advisor and I did that from 2000-2004," Kris said, noting that her Farm Bureau roots were beginning to grow more than ever.

"After I term'd out of the Officer Advisor position, I was looking for something to do with my time. I like to have my fingers in something because I feel being in a leadership role provides you with the opportunity to keep growing. I believe you have to keep growing as a person and educate yourself, otherwise you get stagnant. After 2004, I started doing more with the Fergus County Farm Bureau.

It was natural, as not only did she come from a Farm Bureau Proud family, but Dennis' family had been active in Farm Bureau when they lived in Madison County. Dennis had served as president three separate times for the Fergus County Farm Bureau and Kris twice as secretary.



Kris and her husband Dennis Descheemaeker.

Fergus County Farm Bureau has participated in Farm Safety Day for first graders, where they demonstrated a grain entrapment safety station. When there was a coalition of local agricultural organizations hosting a third-grade ag day, Kris and Dennis would bring a cow-calf pair and talk about production.

Kris had also helped, with collaboration with Mariah Shammel, to assist with Montana's Longest Table. It's a combined effort by several agriculture organizations hosting this event to show the relationship between rural and urban people in a fun way," she said. "We sell tickets for 200 guests, set up our table on 2nd Avenue just off Main street downtown Lewistown and invite restaurants to bring samples of something on their menu that can be grown in the area. You get a great meal, learn about agriculture, get a sense of community and have a great time at the event."

The need to get even more involved in a leadership role struck home when the hard-working woman was diagnosed with

breast cancer in October 2018. After going through a lumpectomy and 17 radiation treatments and kicking cancer, Kris said it changed her mindset.

"We always thought Dennis or myself should run for the board, but he's so busy

**“ Women generally have the organizational skills to be good leaders, and often have more time to do outside activities than men on the ranch. Women this day in age, and especially ranch women, aren't afraid to step up and be heard. ”**

with the ranch that when the Director for District 3 became available, I decided to run. I didn't want to wait another six years for it to open again—I have no idea where I will be then. Instead of saying 'one day I

said I would make it happen now. Getting that cancer diagnosis was a kick in the pants."

"First, cancer is not a death sentence anymore and I am a champion for women's health because of that. When it happens to you and you survive it because of wellness checks, you want to push for other women to realize how important that is," she explained.

Kris believes women are partners in farming and ranching, and many work side-by-side with their husbands and families. "They are very involved and have the knowledge it takes to be a leader. Women generally have the organizational skills to be good leaders, and often have more time to do outside activities than men on the ranch. Women this day in age, and especially ranch women, aren't afraid to step up and be heard."

With her dedication to the state and county Farm Bureaus, her being a caring and active grandmother and helping on the ranch, Kris has proven to truly be an admirable leader.





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## Powderville rancher shares successes of Women's Leadership Committee

BY REBECCA COLNAR, SPOKESMAN EDITOR

**H**aving a commitment to agriculture from a leadership view as well as a rancher's view defines Lillian Ostendorf. The Powderville rancher has dedicated the past 18 years as a volunteer; first as chair of the Montana Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee for 10 years and then as western representative on the American Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee for the next eight years. She wrapped up her tenure on the AFBF WLC in January 2020.

Early on in her involvement as WLC Chair for MFBF, Ostendorf was invited by Senator Baucus to join him on two trade missions to New Zealand and Australia.

"That was early in my role as a WLC leader and that inspired me to become more involved as I was representing

Montana Farm Bureau as a Women's Leadership Committee member," noted Ostendorf.

One new idea Ostendorf made to her growing committee was a by-laws change to have two women serving as WLC district co-chairs instead of one.

"That way our co-chairs could share duties, such as conducting safety programs in their local schools or sharing in events such as the WLC Breakfast at the Capitol during Ag Week at the legislative session," said Ostendorf. "Our committee started the breakfast for legislators and their staff so they could learn more about who Montana Farm Bureau is and we could advocate for agriculture. Ag advocacy is one of my heart-of-heart things. The fact that this breakfast brought



Lillian Ostendorf, right, is recognized by American Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee Chair Sherry Saylor for her work on the WLC Committee for the past eight years.

women to the Capitol to visit with their legislators and testify, helped show women they can make a difference."

As the state WLC director she had a seat on the Montana Farm Bureau Board of Directors, one of the few women on the board at the time. In addition, she encouraged WLC members to participate in what was called Food Check-Out Day. Food Check-Out Day featured women shopping in a grocery store and talking to consumers about agriculture, then donating food to the Ronald McDonald House in Billings. Later on, Northwest Counties WLC members donated food and made meals for the Ronald McDonald Houses in Missoula and Yellowstone and Eastern Montana for Billings.

Ostendorf was elected as Western Region Representative to the AFBF WLC in January, 2012. "The first thing AFBF did was take us to Washington, D.C. to attend the AFBF Women's Boot Camp training. That gave us a lot more confidence in addressing politicians and the media. All women attending the boot camp were automatically entered on the Grassroot Outreach, or GO Team. GO Team members are Farm Bureau's key advocates and thought leaders, those whose views on a subject are taken to be authoritative and influential.



The Women's Committee works closely with the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture to select Accurate Ag Books. Pictured is Lillian Ostendorf showing the selected 2019 book "Right This Very Minute" at the 2019 AFBF Convention in New Orleans.



"The Boot Camp provides excellent training for women, and it was held only annually. I was part of the Advocacy Committee that pushed for having two boot camps each year, and now those boot camps are always full," she added.

In her time on the national committee, she participated in the Centennial Celebration, the Washington, D.C. WLC Fly-In for Agriculture Day, the bi-annual FUSION Conference—a combined meeting for Young Farmers & Ranchers, P&E and WLC members and more.

Youth education is paramount for the WLC. The WLC asks teachers for feedback on proposed Accurate Ag Books and lesson plans, and the committee reads it and critiques it.

The national WLC raises money for the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC), often in the community where the American Farm Bureau Convention is held. Last year, during the AFBF Convention in New Orleans, this impressive organization of farm and ranch women announced they had raised \$237,000 for all RMHC nationwide. "We visited the local Ronald

McDonald House and everyone was very appreciative of the WLC's efforts," said Ostendorf.

Other work included building relationships with Congressional offices—something many women might not do

**“Often women hold back and let men take leadership roles, but there is so much potential for women to be leaders, and the WLC is a fantastic way to do that on the state and national level.”**

on their own. "Women can really make a difference in D.C. and our committee works to prove it. One example was when members of the WLC visited their Congressional office on Capitol Hill to

express their strong concern about legislation that would have limited the age and hours children can work, even on a farm. Our committee members explained the work that farm kids do on family farms and the reason curtailing ages and hours would hurt their family farm and family work ethic. We have been told that women are valuable advocates because they are believable and people trust them."

For the past few years during the annual AFBF convention, the WLC held Collaborate, Communicate and Influence workshops as well as held events on the Cultivation Stage in the trade show with committee members helping with to ensure the educational events ran smoothly.

The goal of the WLC is to surface and train women leaders," said Ostendorf. "Often women hold back and let men take leadership roles, but there is so much potential for women to be leaders, and the WLC is a fantastic way to do that on the state and national level."



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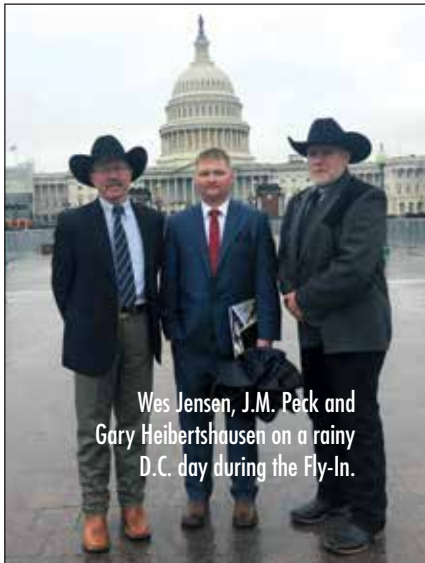
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# Farm Bureau Proud in the Nation's Capital

## Urging members to become active

STORY BY REBECCA COLNAR

**Y**ou *can* make a difference. That's the mantra of Montana Farm Bureau Federation, the state's largest ag association that continually urges its members to become active in the organization and by extension, the political system. Each year MFBF National Affairs Director Nicole Rolf takes a select group of farmers and ranchers to D.C. for the Fly-In. In addition, MFBF has members who serve on the national American Farm Bureau Issues Advisory Committees,



Wes Jensen, J.M. Peck and Gary Heibertshausen on a rainy D.C. day during the Fly-In.

which hold meetings every February at the AFBF offices in D.C. In March 2020, MFBF had four women heading to D.C. to attend the American Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Committee Fly-in for Agriculture Week, although the event was unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, that would have been the impressive third time MFBF members were meeting with the Congressional delegations, discussing issues with peers and honing their

communication skills.

It's extremely important to have farmers and ranchers from Montana heading to D.C. whether it's for Fly-Ins or serving on Issues Advisory Committees. Additionally, there is tremendous value in having MFBF members in D.C. to share first-hand knowledge and expertise on agriculture with Montana's elected officials, staff and agency personnel.

On the following pages, Farm Bureau members share their first-hand experiences whether it's meeting with Montana's Congressional delegation, imparting information with American Farm Bureau staff or touring impressive sights in the awesome city to gain a feel for the history and power the city evokes.

### Fly-In provides unique opportunities

Just what is the MFBF Fly-In? Montana Farm Bureau believes grassroots advocacy is the most effective way to make real policy changes so it seeks to provide opportunities for members to increase their advocacy skills and participation levels. Voting members are encouraged to get involved and make a difference in the agriculture industry by commenting on local, state and national level agency rule proposals, testifying on bills, contacting legislators, and so on. The MFBF Fly-In rewards members for participation in the policy development process with an opportunity to sharpen skills and take their advocacy to the next level on a lobbying trip to Washington, D.C.

In February 2020, MFBF Fly-In participants had the opportunity to experience a full gamut of Washington, D.C. Gary Heibertshausen, Wes Jensen and J.M. Peck, led by MFBF National Affairs Director Nicole Rolf, visited



Megan Hedges, Nicole Rolf, Don Steinbeisser, Jr. and Mike Murphy at the Capitol. The group was visiting Congressional offices during the Issues Advisory Committee meetings.

with their Congressmen, met with agency personnel at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Agriculture, discussed issues with American Farm Bureau policy experts and toured the Supreme Court and Old Post Office.

Visits with the policy directors and economists at American Farm Bureau covered everything from tax issues and climate change to animal traceability, transportation and labor laws.

"They are working to get the H2A guest worker program less complicated for those hiring and being hired. AFBF keeps a close watch on those labor laws, such as one that would limit the sheepherders in this country. We wouldn't have had a clue this was happening unless we visited with AFBF," noted Heibertshausen, who serves as MFBF District 5 Director and Alzada sheep rancher.

"Our trip to the offices on Capitol Hill was excellent," continued Heibertshausen. One of the reasons for the visit was to thank our Congressmen for understanding and helping Montana agriculture, especially with their work to pass the U.S. Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement and the defeat of the Water of the U.S. Rule. We had the opportunity





Gary Heibertshausen, J.M. Peck, Senator Steve Daines, Wes Jensen and Nicole Rolf during the MFBF Fly-In.



Fly-In group with Representative Greg Gianforte.

to sit down with them and their staff to voice our concerns. They provided us with insight on congressional bills. Senator Daines greeted us at the door of his office and although he had to head off to vote, he wanted to make sure he met us. Then we were able to sit down with his top aides. We really appreciated Representative Gianforte and Senator Tester for the input on upcoming legislation, as well.

J.M. Peck, MFBF's Young Farmer & Rancher Committee Chair, added, "Senator Tester was optimistic that permanent legislation would be taken up soon to provide a permanent solution for livestock haulers to ensure our roads and livestock remain safe during transport. In addition, we discussed the need for improved access to mental healthcare and broadband access in our rural communities."

MFBF District 6 Director Wes Jensen found the agency meetings to be especially important. "The most impactful thing for me was sitting down with the

water scientist at the EPA and having the new water rules explained," the rancher noted. "It took five years to get WOTUS reversed and corrected and states given back the rightful jurisdiction of their water. The overreach was monumental. The point is that without the relentless effort of the Farm Bureau it may never have been changed. The water scientist explained how they have clarified the definitions of navigable waters, wetlands, etc., so we will not be looking at this type of overreach again. It was reassuring to see that when allowed to, the system works."

The Department of Agriculture visit with the staff of one of the undersecretaries and seven department heads was quite impressive for a small delegation of farmer/ranchers from Montana. The attentive USDA personnel listened to members' talks about a wide range of issues including new animal traceability rules, brucellosis and chronic wasting disease, Electronic Logging Device requirements for ag transport and endangered species, as well as the beef check-off.

"It's humbling that they wanted to hear from us and get our thoughts," said Jensen. "We had a long discussion about animal traceability rules. The agency remains committed to implementing plans for improved traceability, but they are studying it further so that when it is implemented, they will have even more input from producers and it will be clearer for everyone involved."

In addition to meeting with their Congressmen and agencies, the group



Fly-In members with Senator Jon Tester.





Megan Hedges and Don Steinbeisser, Jr. had the opportunity to tour the White House.

met with Phil Brasher, executive editor of Agri-Pulse, a respected agricultural news agency based in Washington, D.C. Brasher explained how their reporters determine what makes news, how they handle interviews and the best ways to keep up-to-date on the issues.

"The Fly-In is a great opportunity. As I travel around my district, a lot of people say they don't understand what is going on in Washington, D.C. The Fly-In is a prime way to have the opportunity to learn," said Heiberthausen. "You go to the Hill, you meet with American Farm Bureau policy people and you meet one-on-one with people in the agencies. Everyone



J.M. Peck, MFBF Young Farmer and Rancher Committee chair, during a run on the National Mall. He is already training for the YF&R Hoofin' it for Hunger race October 10 in Miles City.

we met with—from the agencies to our Congressmen—was very cordial and invited us back."

J.M. Peck added, "Washington, D.C. is a truly amazing place. It is the home of our democracy and serves as a foundation for our liberty and freedom. As partisan and bitter as the news portrays our government to be, I saw many people working hard to improve the lives of the people who in agriculture and help feed the world with an abundant, safe, sustainable and affordable food."

"I don't know if you can ever know for sure what was our impact from these

meetings, but I do know when you have a face-to-face conversation about a topic and the context of the discussion is understood by both sides, everyone comes away with new knowledge and understanding," Jensen said. "Everyone we met with is very good at their job and has the ability to shape policy; however, they are no different than you and I in that their conclusions are based on information they have received. If we don't show up, someone else will."

### **Farm Bureau: A Respected Organization in Washington, D.C.**

Mention American Farm Bureau in Congress and you get attention. The agricultural organization that is nearly six million strong commands respect for several reasons, the first being its membership size and the other is that it is an organization of farmers and ranchers with set policy. Washington, D.C. is full of lobbyists representing occupations and industries, but Farm Bureau's strength in lobbying centers on its credibility.

"To be influential, you need to look at how many people you represent. Some groups carry a lot of weight because of an issue—say, for instance, the NRA and Second Amendment rights; others because of the large number of people they represent, like AARP. Farm Bureau



(Left) Tom DePuydt, a Saco cattle rancher, talks about the need for consistency in the Farm Service Agency with Dan Gerig, agricultural liaison for Senator Daines. (Above) Managing Director of Public Policy Ryan Yates discusses regulatory issues with sugar beet farmer Don Steinbeisser, Jr. who serves on the Environmental Regulations Advisory Committee.

## ➤ Voter Voice

The Montana Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau sends out policy alerts urging members to submit comments to their elected officials. It's simple. The alert has a pre-written message as well as an easy "click" to send the message to pertinent leaders. Members are encouraged to add personal comments to further drive home a message. Elected officials take stock in communications from their own constituents.

"After visiting with the American Farm Bureau staff and our Congressional delegation and their staffs, I realized how important it is to respond to the alerts sent to us, not only by AFBF, but our own Montana Farm Bureau Legislative Team. Don't underestimate the importance of personal comments whether written or shared face-to-face with our congressmen," said MFBF District 6 Director Wes Jensen who attended the MFBF D.C. Fly-In in February. "You never know when a personal comment might actually change the direction of a law or policy."

Not signed up for alerts? Visit [mfbf.org](http://mfbf.org), click on Policy and Advocacy, then click on Voter Voice – Take Action. There you can sign up for alerts as well as see contact information for your federal and state officials.



Tonya Liles, a Terry rancher, who serves on the Animal Care Committee, with AFBF Public Policy Director Scott Bennett.

is unique because we represent farmers, ranchers, and their livelihoods and cover the interests of the agricultural sector with six million members strong," explained Ryan Yates, managing director of public policy, AFBF. "The average person might not think about farms or farmers any given day, but they are very passionate about food and where it comes from. We are in a unique place because we represent a human need as well as a passion and we represent a diverse sector of the economy."

In addition to diverse commodities, the membership covers different regions of the country as well as all ages of farmers from young to aged. "Because of the way AFBF is structured, when someone on the Hill talks to me, they know I am not telling them what I think but what our membership believes," noted Yates. "Every policy comes from a farmer at a county Farm Bureau. Once folks know we are truly grassroots in every sense of the word, it demands a lot of respect. When I tell a member of Congress "no" on something, it might irritate them, but they respect why we take the position we do."

With Farm Bureau being around for 100 years, the organization has certainly experienced friendly administrations and ones that proved more difficult. Yates indicates that many of Farm Bureaus' policy priorities have aligned with Trump Administration. Currently we have an administration that believes in our issues or agrees with us on a recommendation, it's a good place to be. You need to take advantage of that and work with them to find a path forward and a resolution. For instance, the last



Meeting with officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture during the Fly-In.



administration disagreed with our views on EPA jurisdiction of Waters of the U.S. We developed a nationwide campaign and ultimately lost--but we lost the battle, not the war. This administration listened to our concerns with the WOTUS rule, and repealed the WOTUS rule and replaced it with a workable solution. On the flipside, sometimes there are administrations where you just have to agree to disagree."

Yates noted that even though an administration might not agree with you, you don't walk away for four years. "Every administration has to run a government and they have a profound impact on your members and their profitability. You are always working on the offense or defense with any kind of policy from a federal agency," Yates said.

Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. Oftentimes the partisan politics in Washington can create speedbumps along the way. But Farm Bureau is committed to working across partisan lines to advocate for the needs of our members.

"We don't have the luxury of saying we prefer a particular party," Yates said. The people send us a president and a Congress, and we need to work with whomever that is. The best we can do working with our elected officials is to keep politics out of it and provide them with the best information we can so they can make informed decisions. We've been



Following the IAC meetings, members met with USDA's Lillie Brady, director of intergovernmental and external affairs, USDA.

working this way for a hundred years and plan to do so for another hundred."

### Issues Advisory Committee meetings

Montana Farm Bureau members headed back to the nation's capital February 20-21, this time for American Farm Bureau's Issues Advisory Committee meetings as well as meeting for the second time in two weeks with legislative offices and agencies. The IAC meetings at the association's headquarters in Washington, D.C. brought farmers and ranchers together from across the state to discuss issues of concern. MFBF had members, which are appointed by the MFBF president, on five committees: Animal Care, Environmental Regulations, Farm Policy, Federal Lands and Water.

While many agricultural issues are relevant and similar nationwide, there are others that are more important in

certain regions or have slightly different implications. Having members on the IAC from Montana ensures the western perspective is shared. We can all learn from each other and get a lot more done when we work together.

Tonya Liles, a cattle rancher from Terry, explained to the Animal Care Committee strong concerns regarding feral hogs' entry into Montana. She discussed bison and the threat of brucellosis to Montana cattle across the state if a "wild" or "free-roaming" herd is ever established outside Yellowstone National Park."

There was talk about the Hours of Service/Electronic Logging Devices to include a 150-mile exemption not only from the beginning of a haul but 150 miles from the destination. "We are concerned about livestock being unloaded because the trucker has reached the driving time limit. Having to unload animals unnecessarily will increase stress for the animal as well as increase the risk of injury and disease."

Megan Hedges, who serves on the Farm Policy Committee, talked about one FDA report that caused the pulse crop market to tank overnight. "We had a great market for our pulse crops in the pet food industry; but the moment the FDA released a report that said pulses cause heart problems in dogs, all the food got pulled off the shelves and the market tanked," said pulse crop farmer from Chester. "We're looking for ways to resolve that as well as get new markets for pulses and are hoping President Trump's visit to India bodes well for trade. In addition, we talked about disaster payments and the need in the next farm bill to provide sufficient crop insurance."

The prevailing theme of the Water Committee was water quality. One presentation featured a computer program that can assess an irrigated area



Mike Murphy, center, learns about new methods of managing nutrient runoff during the Water Committee meeting.



and determine the nutrient value. "This could certainly help a farmer determine ways to keep more nutrients in their soil, saving them money and improving soil quality," said Mike Murphy, a rancher from Wolf Creek. "We discussed how agriculture gets blamed for algae bloom when it's a combination of factors; in fact, in some places where there is algae bloom there is no agriculture."

Don Steinbeisser, Jr. said feral hogs, predatory black vultures and other detrimental creatures were the topic of discussion in the Environmental Regulations Committee. "A lot of ranchers are losing calves and fish to the black vultures, but they're considered a protected species; depending on the state, you can get permits to kill them if they're harming your livestock/fish."

The committee learned about the Lake Erie Bill of Rights (LEBOR), a ballot initiative

in Toledo, Ohio, that passed, establishing "irrevocable rights for the Lake Erie Ecosystem to exist, flourish and naturally evolve."

"Obviously this is a real concern for farmers, ranchers and landowners because we believe lakes can't have rights, and this could lead to frivolous lawsuits against farmers—although LEBOR is being challenged in court now," said Steinbeisser, a Sidney sugar beet farmer. "It's important to share information about what we learn at these meetings with our county Farm Bureaus so we can develop good policy."

Discussions in the Federal Lands Committee, consisting mostly of western states, covered the recent scoping meetings for revisions in grazing permits, managing equine under the Wild Horse & Burro Act and discussing migratory bird corridors.

Tom DePuydt, a Saco cattle rancher,

noted, "The Federal Lands Committee also talked about forest fires and the need for local control of them along with more accountability from the government when it comes to fighting fires. We discussed reforms to the National Environmental Policy Act, especially making the process more streamlined; right now, those NEPA regulations are 15,000-20,000 pages."

In addition to IAC meetings, members toured the White House, met with the Lillie Brady, external affairs director at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and visited staff in all three Congressional. The themes were similar in all meetings; the need for international trade, Hours of Service/ELD regulations that are common sense for ag producers and farm program certainty to help farmers with spring planting decisions and disaster preparedness.



## 🔗 The art of making laws and making sausage

Listen to the news today and the hostility between political parties captures the headlines. In such partisan times, it's refreshing one person in Montana is trying to make a difference in the state's capital city. Montana Chief Deputy Attorney General Jon Bennion has opted to take the old adage about the similarities between sausage and lawmaking into an educational, positive and even, yes, tasty event.

January 2019 marked the first year Bennion hosted the unique event, first hosted in his home, inviting legislators from both parties to learn how to work together more effectively and combat the current toxic political environment. In 2020, he again held the event at the Methodist church in Clancy, which attracted 20 or so legislators and he added two lobbyists: one from the AFL-CIO and the other, Nicole Rolf from Montana Farm Bureau.

"When I heard that expression you never want to see two things being made, laws or sausage – I didn't agree," said Bennion. "I think you can do both really well, and it's very fulfilling. The idea was to get people together for both parties to have a little fun, draw a little parallel between good legislating and good sausage making and I think it's been a success."

To make his point, Bennion covered the fourteen rules of good sausage making, starting with pork, spices and other ingredients and compared it to the equivalent of lawmaking. A few of the similarities I included "Keep your work area clean" (sausage) and "Always work with integrity" (lawmaking); and

"Don't over stuff" (sausage) and "Keep bills simple" (law making.)

"It's an important reminder that even though we are not going to agree on everything, we can still work together on some issues to achieve what is best for our constituencies and Montana as a whole. We can always be courteous to others, while simultaneously maintaining our principles," said Rolf. "Montana Farm Bureau is a non-partisan organization, and we will work with anyone who is willing and interested in doing what's right for agriculture. I have witnessed first-hand how partisan things can be in Helena, and especially Washington, D.C. The fact that people like our chief deputy attorney general are trying to help the Legislature work more efficiently is refreshing. A bonus—we all took home some delicious homemade Italian and breakfast sausage."



# REAL Montana offers different Washington, D.C. perspective

Since REAL Montana was formed in 2013, Montana Farm Bureau generally has members and staff participating in Resource Education and Agriculture Leadership (REAL) Montana and also serving on the REAL Advisory Board. REAL is a comprehensive two-year program offering in-depth education and training in the agriculture and natural resource industries. These industries in Montana are facing unprecedented change due to new technologies, consumer preferences, environmental concerns, government regulation, and global trade. At the same time, the population base from which they draw their leadership is diminishing. REAL Montana works to address this leadership shortage through high quality leadership and industry training.

To date, the 2019-2021 REAL class has held a leadership training seminar in Bozeman, conducted a hands-on a media training session in Billings and had a federal policy trip to Washington, D.C. in early February.

"The D.C. trip was inspiring because we had so much access to upper level staff and opportunities in the nation's capital," said MFBF's Director of Member Relations Sue Ann Streufert who is in the REAL Montana class this year.

"We were able to get into the beautiful Roosevelt Building

where the White House staff works. We had the opportunity to go through a simulated commodity lockdown at the National Ag Statistics Service building. This is where commodity experts—the statisticians and PhDs from NASS—compile all of the data from across the country and come up with crop reports and planting projections. They are literally locked in the room for 24 hours while they compile the statistics. The head of NASS was there and had so much knowledge and experience of how the country is run," said Streufert. "There is such a negative narrative about people who are 'lifers' yet you learn those people who have been in D.C. for many years are extremely knowledgeable and integral to the running of the government and the agencies."



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What was most impressive, Streufert noted, was how many good people are in Washington, D.C. working on behalf of the natural resources and agriculture industries. "When you're there, you are reminded that there are a lot of great, hard-working people."

Montana Farm Bureau Vice President Cyndi Johnson, added, "The opportunity to meet folks in Washington, D.C. who play huge roles in our natural resource industries in Montana, has really strengthened the realization that our Government is, indeed, "touchable". Classmates were able to set up, then follow through with, meetings with the Treasury, Energy, Forestry and Agriculture agencies. Thanks to REAL Montana, the experience in our nation's capital is a forever memory."





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# ACE program continues to empower Farm Bureau members

BY REBECCA COLNAR

The ACE program was designed to empower Farm Bureau members to actively advocate on key industry issues and be confident, effective leaders in their County Farm Bureau and local communities. The program emphasizes leadership development, issue education and the engagement of local communities.

The one-year program accepts up to 10 people who participate in six seminars throughout the year. This year's ACE class began in January with a seminar on personal leadership and communication strengths. Participants worked with industry and leadership experts to discuss how their personal leadership style and strengths impact them as an ag advocate, business owner and leader within their community.

“I believe through this Farm Bureau training, I will become a stronger advocate for agriculture, and I am looking forward to working across the state with those involved in ACE.”

The seminar in early March focused on working with the media and how to conduct a positive interview highlighting agriculture. The planned seminars for the rest of the year will be held in Bozeman in May, July and September with final projects, presentations and graduation held during the Montana Farm Bureau Annual Convention in November.

The ACE students will continue to hone their work in the group and will be putting to use the leadership and communication skills learned earlier in the year and discussing:

- how to build effective coalitions and why/how they can be beneficial to rural Montana and agriculture.
- how to use the organizational values



Katherine Taylor



Joy DePuydt

of Farm Bureau to be more effective advocates and identifying current needs in their communities that Farm Bureau can meet.

- how to effectively share their stories by learning methods of storytelling and empathic listening that will help create strong connections with others.

ACE participants for the 2020 training are: Ed Bandel, Floweree; Pam Converse, Conrad; Joy DePuydt, Saco; Kris Descheemaeker, Lewistown; Mary Hill, Raynesford; Doreen McClure, Roy; Katherine Taylor, Bozeman; Gail Vennes, Townsend; and Dominique Woodham, Big Timber.

Katherine Taylor decided to apply for

the Montana Farm Bureau Advocate, Communicate, Educate (ACE) training because having an ag communications degree and being involved in Collegiate YF&R made her want to continue to develop the skills she had learned. “I believe through this Farm Bureau training, I will become a stronger advocate for agriculture, and I am looking forward to working across the state with those involved in ACE.”

Joy DePuydt, who ranches in Saco, has praise for the training after only two sessions. “ACE has opened my eyes to the need of a positive voice in agriculture that helps people understand agriculture’s concerns, what we are doing and why. Even more importantly was learning to listen. We need to listen to those who have differing opinions of farmers and ranchers, and work to solve issues together rather than be antagonistic.”

Chelcie Cargill, ACE training coordinator noted, “I’m thrilled to lead another group of Farm Bureau members through the ACE program. This year’s class continues to exceed my expectations and it’s a joy to work with them as they discover ways to become outstanding leaders for agriculture and their rural communities. We’re off to a wonderful start and I’m excited to see where the rest of the year takes us.”





## Safety Matters

Montana's agriculture industry deserves a comprehensive safety program to develop a thriving safety culture for today and tomorrow. By offering a collaborative approach to safety, members of the *Montana State Fund Agriculture Group* will benefit from the partnering of safety professionals at Montana State Fund as well as Montana Farm Bureau Federation.

## Safety Pays



Members of the associations listed above are eligible to join the Montana State Fund Agricultural Group Program (MSFAG) offered through Montana State Fund (MSF) and administered by Montana Farm Bureau Federation. As a program member you may be eligible for a dividend on your State Fund Workers' Compensation Insurance premium. The MSFAG program is comprised of MSF agricultural policyholders who are committed to improving the safety culture for their employees. If the overall experience of the group is favorable, the participating policyholders may realize a return of premium.

Contact one of the participating associations listed above for more details and to obtain an enrollment form.

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# Montana Farm Bureau Foundation News

## Powder River First Responders earns Centennial Community Initiative Grant

When the Montana Farm Bureau Federation turned 100 in 2019, the Montana Farm Bureau Foundation offered grant funding for the betterment of communities around the state. With these grants the Foundation looked to increase rural prosperity and stimulate economic development by strengthening its roots and bettering small towns across Montana. The Foundation's goal was to raise \$100,000 for the grants.

"The Centennial Community Initiative was established to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs, support infrastructure improvements, increase support in community service, and provide a long-lasting impact in Montana rural areas," noted Scott Kulbeck, Foundation Coordinator. "We realize that \$100,000 is just a start in addressing rural development. Our hope is this program will be used to kick-start projects where seed money is needed to attract larger funding sources. The grant money could help in the completion of a business plan that allows an entrepreneur to secure financing or it may be a grant that is used as matching funds so that a project can attract a larger grant."

One of the grant applications receiving approval was the Powder River First Responders who provides a unique health care service in Broadus. Many people who need health care in Broadus need to drive 90 miles for the basics and 180 miles for more serious health care. The goal of Powder River First Responders operated by Shane Copps and wife Kesa, is to keep people at home instead of needing to make the long trip for health care.

The Copps are the only A-EMTs in the history of Broadus; that means they are the highest level of medical providers. What the couple saw was the need to fill in gaps on the health care scene and provide local care to assist people at home, whether it's conducting a health safety check, visiting with someone about

medications or conducting timely wound care.

"If we can have someone manage issues in their homes, we can save both health care providers, the state and insurance money. By providing this service, it helps to cut down on ambulance runs and cuts back on volunteers having to drive 90 miles to the Emergency Room," explains Copps.

In the last legislative session, the Montana Legislature started the Community Healthcare program, better known as Community Paramedicine. Broadus was chosen as one of the pilot sites for this program, which is considered to be a relatively new and evolving

healthcare model. It allows paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) to operate in expanded roles by assisting with public health and primary healthcare and preventive services to underserved populations in the community. However, the funding for the pilot project is expiring and the insurance companies aren't paying for some of this service yet; therefore, the Copps needed a way to bridge that gap.

"We are proving we can make this work and save insurance money. The Farm Bureau grant will help us get this program really rolling, helping fund fuel costs, salary and equipment between the government grant money and insurance



Shane and Kesa Copps, Powder River First Responders, are using the MFBF Foundation Centennial Community Initiative Grant to provide critical medical help to their rural community.

“ If we can have someone manage issues in their homes, we can save both health care providers, the state and insurance money. By providing this service, it helps to cut down on ambulance runs and cuts back on volunteers having to drive 90 miles to the Emergency Room. ”

coming on. This program has proven itself to be very cost-effective," noted the EMT.

"We have a gentleman we have taken to the hospital about 10 times over the last six months and about 20 times over the last two years for seizure-like activity. After starting this program, we were able to get him into a local clinic for a blood draw before transporting him to the ER. We were able to visit with him about getting some social support and some mental health counseling. The blood draw showed a mineral deficiency that had alleviated itself in about two hours (usual time to an ER so they never saw it). This deficiency was causing his heart to work funny and causing him to pass out. We were able to get him a counselor to help with his alcohol consumption and his social issues. Today, we have not taken this gentleman to the ER in over three months, he has had no episodes as he is on medication, he has been sober for 2.5 months and walks to the coffee

shop and pool every day. I feel that by having this program in place we saved his life and we made his quality of life much better."

A trip in the ambulance to the ER is \$1500-\$2000 per trip plus the cost of going to the ER and the hospital. That's a huge savings to the individual and insurance.

The Copps have helped an elderly lady who is alone and would like to stay at home by doing a lot of little things to help her, including a life assist button. By staying home, she saves so much money by paying for an apartment instead of a room at the long-term facility.

Doctors and nurses are excited about it and more than willing to provide information on how Copps can best manage their patients.

"I became motivated to do this because I've always thought the medical field was interesting and I have a lot of family in it. When Kesa and I moved back to Broadus,

I had free time and wanted to give back to the community," he said. The energetic couple joined the ambulance service and then got involved with the community paramedicine program, a perfect fit.

"We appreciate Farm Bureau giving us some help and letting this program build up and grow on its own," said Copps. "This grant will keep us going so we don't have a lull when the state grant runs out and the insurance kicks in. We can really help people in our community."

Gina Stevens, who serves on the CCI Grant Committee, said the group awarded the grant because of the benefits to the rural community. "People in rural areas must travel many miles before they can get medical attention. This is a critical and common-sense service to assist people in remote areas as well as save everyone involved time and money."

For more information in the CCI Grants, visit MFB Foundation Coordinator Scott Kulbeck, 406-587-3153, [scottk@mfbf.org](mailto:scottk@mfbf.org).

# Want to Support the Future of Montana Agriculture?



**PICK ME** the next time you renew your license plates and you'll be supporting Montana agriculture.

The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation's license plate funds agricultural research and education programs across Montana, including Mini-Grants, Ag Leadership Scholarships, Accurate Ag Books in Montana schools and the Youth Speech Contest, to name a few.

To learn more go to [www.mfbf.org/foundation](http://www.mfbf.org/foundation).





# Animal Health Bulletin



## Department of Livestock announces Johne's Control Program for Montana Cattle and Dairy Producers

In response to feedback from the veterinary community and buyers of Montana cattle, the Department of Livestock (DOL) has developed a state program to reduce the spread of Johne's disease through animal sales and movement.

Johne's is a contagious and usually fatal bacterial disease that primarily affects the small intestine of cattle. The Johne's bacterium is spread between animals through feces. Signs of the disease include diarrhea and weight loss, despite a normal appetite. Signs are rarely seen until two or more years after the initial infection, which usually occurs within 6 months of birth. As a result, animals such as replacement females or bulls, may be infected when purchased, despite appearing healthy.

The goals of the Montana Johne's Control Program include:

1. Minimize the spread of Johne's disease through animal sales and movement.
2. Identify positive animals/herds and implement management practices to eliminate the disease.
3. Support non-infected herds by identifying biosecurity practices to prevent the introduction of the disease into their herds.
4. Create a market opportunity for participating herds to advertise their involvement in the program.

Participating producers work with their local veterinarian to develop a herd health plan addressing biosecurity, herd testing, and management of high-risk animals. Producers then obtain a "level of certification" based on the health status of their herd, and their testing plan (whole herd testing vs. individual animal testing). Higher levels of certification suggest a herd is lower risk of being infected with the disease.

MDOL encourages producers to mention their participation in the program while marketing their cattle to show their dedication to minimizing the risk of Johne's transmission within the industry. Likewise, customers should inquire about the health status of the source herd, or at a minimum, the status of the dam of the purchased animal. It is important for those buying cattle to understand that a positive, managed herd is lower risk than a herd with an unknown/non-advertised status.

Johne's is a reportable disease in Montana and there are federal restrictions on the movement of positive animals across state lines. Additionally, there have been civil litigation cases brought against producers that have knowingly sold Johne's positive animals into non-slaughter channels, including for breeding purposes.

MDOL recognizes the significant time, effort and expense necessary to manage a herd for Johne's disease; however, all livestock producers have a responsibility to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

Questions can be directed to the State Veterinarians Office at **406-444-2043** or your local veterinarian.

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# COUNTY NEWS

Due to the coronavirus, many county Farm Bureaus cancelled their face-to-face programs and events, but have persisted with board conference calls and small meetings. Some counties managed to hold events in early March before the virus affected Montana. Remember, county Farm Bureaus are still there, working for their membership. If you have any questions about your county Farm Bureau or need to know about any upcoming or cancelled events, check out the Montana Farm Bureau Facebook page, your county Farm Bureau Facebook page, or contact your county Farm Bureau presidents.

**Northwest Counties** donated \$1,000 to the Missoula Ronald McDonald House in lieu of their cooking event which is postponed until volunteers can be in the house again.

**Sweet Grass County** had a board meeting on March 2; they have a candidate's forum scheduled in late April in Big Timber, so stay tuned if it will still be held.

**Gallatin County** had a board meeting March 4.

**Carbon-Stillwater County** had a board meeting March 10 with **Powder River-Carter County** holding a Program of Work Planning meeting March 12.

**Custer-Fallon County** held a board meeting March 24.

**Lewis & Clark County** held a meeting to discuss a problematic zoning issue in their county, and they are working hard to ensure agricultural land owners are protected. In addition, they have designed four different versions of this sign to be posted throughout Lewis & Clark County on popular roadsides and intersections where members own land. They want to utilize the catchy slogan in the more urban areas where agriculture is misunderstood or unknown.



Lewis & Clark County's roadside signs.



The McCone County Farm Bureau booth at Circle Ag Day.

**Phillips County** had a program of work planning meeting March 17 via conference call.

The **Meagher County** Board plans to meet April 9, with the **Park County** board meeting slated for April 16.

## **PBR Premier Series Event in Billings, Mont. Canceled**

PUEBLO, Colo. – In light of U.S. and global health authority guidelines regarding

COVID-19 (coronavirus), the PBR Unleash The Beast's Billings Invitational, presented by Cooper Tires, event set to take place at First Interstate Arena – MetraPark on Friday, April 17, Saturday, April 18 and Sunday, April 19 in Billings, Mont., has been canceled. PBR is exploring alternatives to broadcast the canceled competition via CBS, RidePass, and RidePass Pro FloRodeo from a venue closed to fans. PBR had offered discounted tickets to Farm Bureau members. Fans who purchased tickets will be able to receive a refund (less any applicable fees) from the original point of purchase. For fans who purchased tickets through the NILE (Northern International Livestock Exposition) refund information will be communicated via email. We appreciate the support and understanding of our fans, competitors, partners and staff.



**Rosebud-Treasure County** hosted a Montana State Fund Ag Safety Training in Hysham March 6. They had a workshop in the morning and one in the afternoon. The local Treasure Belles served lunch.

Jim Larson, Montana State Fund Ag Safety Program, discusses safety ideas during the Rosebud-Treasure County event.

# Winners of “Montana Ag in Color” Drawing Contest

The Montana Farm Bureau Federation has announced the winners of the Montana Youth Agriculture Literacy program drawing contest. “Montana Ag in Color” was developed in recognition of National Ag Week, March 22-28, as a creative competition for elementary school children. Each grade was given a different agricultural theme ranging from “Grains of Montana” and “Cattle of Montana” to noxious weeds, farm safety and ag-related careers. One winner was selected from each grade with judges selecting one drawing from the winners to receive the “Farm Bureau Proud” designation.

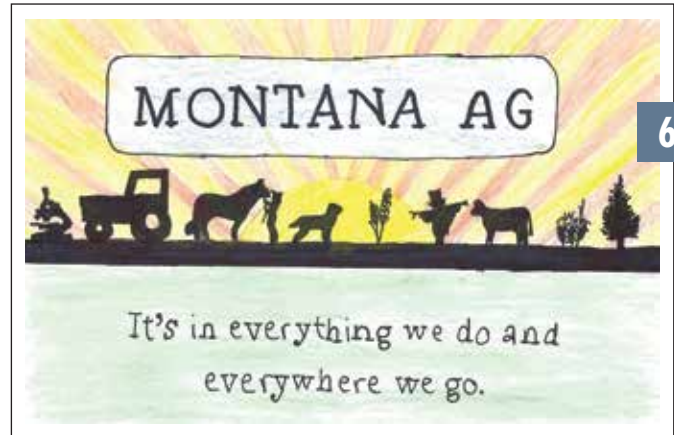
## Winners

- Kindergarten** – Kimber Ross,  
Ekalaka Elementary, Carter County
- First Grade** – Piper Frye,  
Ekalaka Elementary, Carter County
- Second Grade** – Dylan Johnson,  
Chester Joplin Inverness Elementary, Liberty County
- Third Grade** – Rhiaunna Simonson,  
Whitewater Elementary, Phillips County
- Fourth Grade** – Eva Mitchell,  
Hillcrest Elementary, Wheatland County
- Fifth Grade** – Emerson Downing,  
Saco Elementary, Phillips County
- Sixth Grade** – Kaitlyn Noyes,  
Townsend Middle School, Broadwater County

Kaitlyn Noyes received an additional designation as MFBF’s 2020 “Farm Bureau Proud” drawing winner for encompassing agriculture and Farm Bureau values.

Entries were judged by the Montana Farm Bureau Women’s Leadership Committee on agricultural content, originality, neatness and reproducibility.

“It was fun to be on the selection committee for the Montana Ag in Color contest, which welcomed kindergarten through sixth grade students,” said MFB Women’s Leadership Committee’s Carla Lawrence. “It was a difficult task to select winners with all the talented artists who entered the contest. We hope the students who participated in this contest increased their knowledge about agriculture.”



Winning entries will be printed and distributed on usable items and educational materials and posted on Montana Farm Bureau’s website and Facebook page.





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local dealer to save the big bucks.

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# Political seminar teaches **tactics** for a winning campaign

**R**unning for office not only requires fortitude and determination but the knowledge of how to run a successful campaign. On March 2-3 the Montana Farm Bureau held the Victory Montana Campaign Seminar in Helena. The comprehensive training covered everything from consideration, exploration and budget to campaign tactics and getting elected.

"Before announcing your run for office, you need to make sure you are on the right side of the issues," said Mike Sistak, director, Grassroots Program Development, American Farm Bureau Federation. "A successful candidate will know the issues of greatest concern to their electorate and build the campaign around those issues. Secondly, be prepared before you announce with a pre-written statement and a press release."



Julie Dooling, running for re-election in House District 70, in a mock interview.

The American Farm Bureau developed the campaign seminar to be a resource for people running for office. "Farm Bureau is a well-respected organization in every state," said Sistak. "Candidates running for local office know they can come to their Farm Bureau to get expertise on running and winning campaign. I have been around campaigns for a long time; I've consulted and I've volunteered. I've seen good candidates run bad campaigns. I want to help people learn how to run a campaign and how to win."

The class received hands-on experience by working on a case study involving two candidates running for state senator,



Campaign school participants work on a case study.

as well as conducting mock interviews which were later critiqued by the entire class. They learned to develop a 25-word statement and to stay on message. In addition, Sistak covered having a detailed budget, a workable communications plan and well-organized volunteers. Part of the class covered the roll of social media in a campaign including the tip that short, phone-shot videos can be a great way to connect with your audience.

Joel Krautter from Sidney is an incumbent in House District 35 as well as a second-time attendee of the MFBF Campaign School. "I used it as a refresher course on what I learned in 2018. It served as a reminder to use my 25-word statement on why I'm running. This campaign school is comprehensive as it covers every aspect of a campaign."

This is the first time Alice Buckley, Bozeman, decided to run for public office, setting her sights on House District 63 which encompasses Montana State University. She found the campaign school to be inspiring. "It was amazing to be in a room with other candidates who believe in being involved in local politics. It was motivating to realize many of the same issues are important across the entire state, such as mental health, rural economic development and education. I feel I'm walking away with new friends whom I respect. I really appreciate the Montana Farm Bureau holding this campaign school."



American Farm Bureau's Mike Sistak talks about good people to serve on your support committee.

The campaign school is for candidates running for any office. Luke Jergensen, who is running for County Commissioner in Park County, said he signed up for the campaign school because he had never run a campaign before. "I had the time and I thought this would be a good way to flesh out some ideas. The school has taught me about the 14-86 rule, solidified what I thought to be true and will help me win on my platform of caring about our community and our underserved youth."

MFBF's State Affairs Director Rachel Cone added, "Montana Farm Bureau hosts this campaign school with the help of American Farm Bureau to offer candidates a way to learn how to run a winning campaign. Farm Bureau especially wants to give the farmers and ranchers a voice in the legislature and other public offices. It's rewarding when we see our campaign school students win at the polls and become successful in their elected offices. We appreciate everyone who participated in the school this year and wish them the best in the November elections."



# The Kemptons — By Trudy Kempton Dana West to Montana — By Christine Wortman-Engren

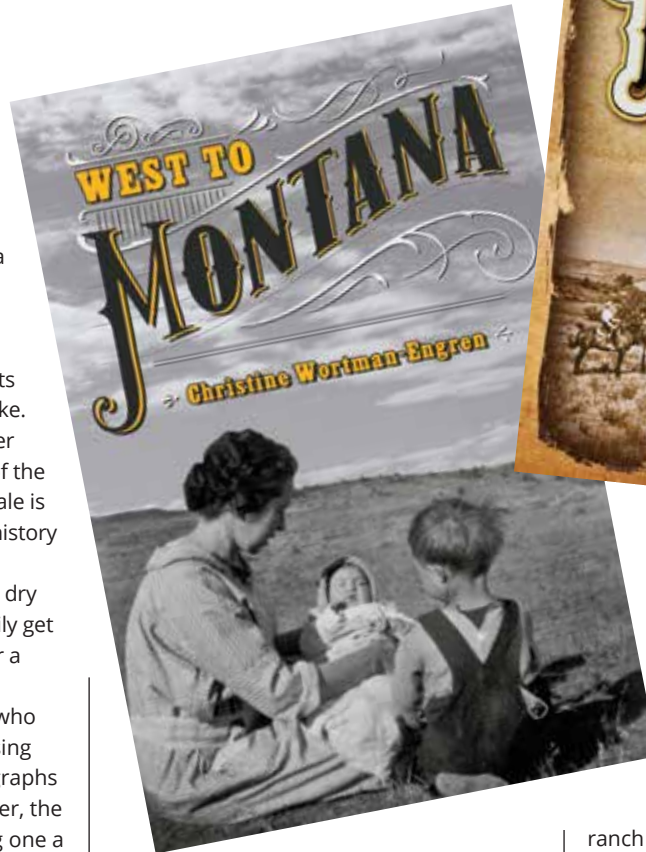
REVIEW BY REBECCA COLNAR

Finding a local press that published books featuring “local” subjects is rewarding. Farcountry Press in Helena recently published two soft-cover books about Montana ranch families: *The Kemptons: Adventures of a Montana Ranch Family* and *West to Montana*.

In its day, the Kempton Ranch was one of the largest horse and cattle operations in Montana, selling mounts to armies and polo playing royalty alike. The family descended from Mayflower Pilgrims, Sioux Indians and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Their tale is written as an historic story, not as a history book which makes it easy, enjoyable reading instead of plowing through a dry tome. The author doesn’t let the family get bogged down with too many dates or a bombardment of family names.

Written by Trudy Kempton Dana, who gleaned much of the materials by using diaries, letters, accounts and photographs along with talking to her elderly father, the book flows along the decades, giving one a keen vision of Eastern Montana.

The book begins with a summary of “People” and “Settings” which include Kemptons and “Other People” who weave into the fabric of the story. The settings



are primarily the Kempton Ranch near the small town of Terry, the Kempton Hotel and Prairie County. There are plenty of descriptive black-and-white photos of the



places and people.

The family was adventurous and entertaining—for instance, Berney Kempton joined up with Doc Carver’s Wild West Show.

One chapter is devoted to the outstanding horses bred by the family. If you like hearing about the time period on a Montana

ranch between the 1880s into the 1960s, plan to settle down and have a good read.

*West to Montana* throws the net further as the saga follows generations of Wortmans, Godsey, Gilmore and Ness families as they move west from the Atlantic Colonies to post-Civil War Missouri farms and then into the Montana Territory, settling in the tough Missouri River Breaks. Similar to the Kempton’s book, *West to Montana* is written as a novel instead of a basic family history book.

I’m writing this review in the midst of the Coronavirus outbreak, and two things come to mind; that people have endured hard times and come out tougher and smarter than before; and if you are spending the majority of your time at home, both of these books are a fine way to enjoy history, learn about early Montana, and make the idle hours speed by.



The books are \$17.95 each and are available at your local bookstore (just ask!), Amazon or by emailing the publisher, [books@farcountrypress.com](mailto:books@farcountrypress.com).



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For more information on the YF&R Program and how to get involved, go to [www.mfbf.org](http://www.mfbf.org) or contact Sue Ann Streufert at [sueanns@mfbf.org](mailto:sueanns@mfbf.org), (406) 587-3153.